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## Bullying in schools : students' perspectives

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## Bullying in schools : students' perspectives

### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate where and how often in the school bullying occurred, whether bullying consisted of physical and/or verbal characteristics, and whether incidents of bullying would decrease following an intervention consisting of 8 classroom guidance lessons. These lessons were taught to 35 sixth grade students over a period of 16 weeks. Overall, bullying incidents decreased for both males and females, most bullying incidents took place on the playground, and students reported school officials did a good job in preventing bullying and creating a safe environment for learning.

# BULLYING IN SCHOOLS: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

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A Research Paper

Presented to

The Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling,

And Postsecondary Education

University of Northern Iowa

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

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Amy L. Schultz

May, 1999

This Research Paper by: Amy L. Schultz

Entitled: BULLYING IN SCHOOLS: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Education.

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Think back to earlier school days as a student in the upper elementary grades. Can you recall a time when you were “bullied” by another child or group of children? The majority of adults can remember at least one incident where they felt victimized at school (Barone, 1997). Most researchers agree that bullying can be defined as a student or group of students repeatedly, over a period of time, physically or psychologically attacking another student (Barone, 1997; Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995; Hoover & Hazler, 1991; Hoover, Oliver & Thomson, 1993).

Bullying has most likely been a problem in schools for quite some time, but only recently have researchers begun to investigate the nature of this problem. Olweus (1993) confirmed this by stating that many people are acquainted with the “bully/victim problem.” However, it was not until fairly recently-- in the early 1970s--that efforts were made to study this problem systematically. For a number of years, these attempts to investigate bullying were largely confined to Scandinavia. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, bullying among school children has also received some public and research attention in other countries such as Japan, England, Canada, and the United States (Olweus, 1993).

Perhaps bullying is such a pervasive problem because it is often looked upon as a part of growing up and a way to “toughen up” children (Barone, 1997; Hoover et al., 1993). However, there are indications that, without intervention, bullying incidents can lead to long-term emotional and psychological damage.

According to Barone (1997), “bullying can extend across the generations: the children of bullies often become bullies themselves” (p. 81). Furthermore, recent studies of bullying in schools suggest that the problem is widespread and that bullying not only causes considerable suffering to individual pupils but also has a damaging effect on school atmosphere (Tattum & Lane, 1988). The first step in evaluating this concern is a comprehensive literature review on the concept of bullying.

## Literature Review

### History of Bullying

A strong societal interest in bully/victim problems was first aroused in Sweden in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Olweus, 1993), and it quickly spread to the other Scandinavian countries. In Norway, bully/victim problems were an issue of general concern in the mass media and among teachers and parents for a number of years, but the school authorities did not involve themselves officially with the phenomenon. Some years ago, a marked change took place. In late 1982, a newspaper reported that three 10 to 14-year-old boys from the northern part of Norway had committed suicide, in all probability because of severe bullying by peers (Olweus, 1993). Olweus suggested that this event aroused considerable unease and tension and led to the nationwide campaign against bully/victim problems in Norwegian primary and secondary/junior high grades, launched by the Ministry of Education in 1983.

This campaign involved Olweus and his colleagues doing research in the Norwegian and Great Britain comprehensive school systems. In 1983, Olweus and his colleagues used an anonymous self-report survey to study bullying among students aged 8-16. Sixteen percent of students from the survey were involved in bully-victim problems more than once or twice a term: 7% identified themselves as bullies and 9% identified themselves as victims (Charach, et al., 1995). In Great Britain, the surveys revealed higher rates of bullying. Among a population size of 234 students between the ages of 13 and 15 years, 12% of students indicated they were bullies, and 22% indicated they were victims of bullies more than once or twice a term (Charach et al., 1995). To date, no one has published a similar survey of bullying among students in North American schools.

Other researchers have explored the area of bullying and victimization. Perry, Kusel, and Perry (1988), in a Norwegian study, used a peer nomination scale to examine victimization among children in grades 3 to 6. In a survey of 165 students, 10% of children reported that they had been severely victimized.

Another study that took place in Toronto, Canada also showed a concern for bullying within the schools (Charach et al., 1995). In this study, 22 classrooms in 16 schools were selected with grades from junior kindergarten to grade eight. This study was different from the Perry et al.(1988) study in that the day before distributing the questionnaires, each classroom held a group discussion about bullying problems. This ensured that all students understood the concept of

bullying. According to the students in the Toronto study, bullying is a frequent occurrence, with 49% reporting that they had been bullied at least once or twice during the term. The authors went on to say that 20% percent of students reported being bullied more than once or twice during the term, while 8% reported being bullied regularly, weekly or more often.

Prior to the 1990s, little was known about bullying in the United States. What was available concerning this topic was more opinion pieces from European studies rather than research (Olweus, 1978). The basic parameters of bullying had not been investigated until a series of studies was undertaken to examine student perceptions of bullying and victimization (Hazler, Hoover, & Oliver, 1991). The results of this study showed that students felt that late elementary and middle school years were worst for bullying, with 28% percent of students reporting they were bullied frequently and that the rate of victimization increased from approximately age 9 and decreased around age 13 and 14.

### Bullying Demographics

When looking at bullying among boys and girls, there is a trend for boys to be more exposed to bullying than girls (Olweus, 1993). The tendency is particularly marked in the secondary/junior high settings and is related more to direct bullying than to verbal bullying. Barone (1997), however, concluded from his study that only 47% of the victims of bullying in middle school are boys. Thus, according to the students' own perceptions, the majority (53%) of the



victims of bullies are girls. Barone (1997) agreed with Oleweus in his findings related to direct/physical bullying. Barone found that the bullying which takes place among boys tends to be more physical (punching, kicking, pushing, and so on) than that which takes place among girls (which is usually more verbal in nature). Barone (1997) went on to say that, "Among the students who said that the bullying they had experienced was mostly physical, 89.3% were boys. Among those students who said that the bullying they experienced was mostly verbal, 67.1% were girls" (p. 81).

While bullying is a pervasive problem school-wide, there is evidence to suggest that bullying occurs most often in specific locations in the schools. For example, according to Siann, Callaghan, Glissov, Lockhart, and Rawson (1994), it appears that bullying is most likely to take place on the playground, in the hallways, and going to and from school. Research by Whitney and Smith (1993) corroborated this point. They found that the majority of the bullying was reported to have occurred in the playground, particularly by junior/middle school pupils. For secondary pupils, bullying was more widespread, including the playground and corridors and classrooms. Sharp and Smith (1994) stated that for most pupils, bullying occurs in and around school, the playground being the most common location. They added that in primary schools, three-quarters of pupils who are bullied are bullied during breaks or lunchtimes. In secondary schools, bullying is more evenly spread across school grounds, corridors and classrooms (Sharp &

Smith, 1994). All this research shows how important it is to focus on bullying within school systems and on how to decrease its prevalence.

When children are victimized by bullies, who do they talk to about their concerns? The majority of students who are victimized talked to their parents and/or teachers about it (Charach et al., 1995). Whitney and Smith (1993) suggested if students are the victims of bullies they are significantly more likely to tell an adult at home than a teacher at school. Yet it appears that most students, parents, and school faculty feel that adults need to play an active role in addressing the problem of bullying in schools (Charach et al., 1995).

Bullying is probably seen in some form every day in classrooms and playgrounds, yet the effects of this “routine” behavior on victims, bullies, and even witnesses can be significant. Victims frequently experience a loss of self-esteem and feelings of isolation, which according to new research, can last into adulthood (Hazler, et al., 1991). Their grades may suffer because their attention is being drawn away from learning. Sharp and Smith (1994) stated that some children may experience stress-related symptoms, and they may eventually avoid bullying by not going to school. Being repeatedly victimized may even push “good kids” to extremes, such as starting fights or bringing weapons to school to exact vengeance on their tormentors. Barone (1997) supported this with an example of a junior high student who decided to end four years of taunting by other children. In 1987, this student brought a gun to school and fatally shot

another student before turning the gun on himself in class. Classmates said that nobody really had anything against the boy, “He was just someone to pick on” (p.80).

There are also long-term ramifications for those who perpetrate the bullying. Bullies whose behavior is allowed to continue are five times more likely than their classmates to wind up in juvenile court, to be convicted of crimes, and, when they become adults, to have children with aggression problems (Hazler, 1994). Furthermore, pupils who are persistently involved in bullying others are much more likely as young adults to be convicted of anti-social behavior offenses (Sharp & Smith, 1994). Unless challenged, they may continue to use bullying tactics in their relationships with other people.

Even students and adults who are witnesses are affected (Hazler, 1996). They must deal with the lowered self-esteem and loss of control that accompanies feeling unsafe and unable to take action. Hazler (1996) stated that the result is children and adults who do all they can to avoid recognizing when someone else is being hurt. Also, if unchallenged, the witnesses can learn that bullying is a quick and effective way of getting what they want. Sharp and Smith (1994) stated, “Bullying can pervade the relationships of pupils and become accepted as normal” (p.2).

### Bullying Interventions

Olweus (1993) has designed a comprehensive intervention program that has four main components. They are: General Prerequisites (which includes awareness and involvement), Measures at the School Level (which includes items such as questionnaire surveys and parent groups), Measures at the Class Level (which includes classroom rules and meetings and classroom activities), and Measures at the Individual Level (which includes individual counseling and discussion groups).

The major goals of this intervention program are to reduce as much as possible--ideally to eliminate completely--existing bully/victim problems in and out of the school setting and to prevent the development of new problems (Olweus, 1993). All of these measures are considered to be useful in a program designed to counteract bully/victim problems. Olweus(1993) stated that two changes must occur to realize these goals in the General Prerequisites component of a school-based intervention program: (a) adults in school and, to some degree, at home become aware of the extent of bully/victim problems in “their” school, and (b) the adults decide to engage themselves, with some degree of seriousness, in changing the situation.

The research results presented earlier have clearly shown bullying to be a considerable problem in Scandinavian schools (as well as in schools in many other countries). No school environment can be regarded as “bully proof.”

Nevertheless, to work concretely with the problems of a particular school, it is essential to have as much involvement as possible in the fight against this epidemic. Sharp and Smith (1994) stated that high-quality training sessions to inform people about bullying can motivate and energize the school community to act.

This awareness and involvement lead to the next part of Olweus' intervention program, Measures at the School Level. Here, the target group is the entire student population of the school, and there is no particular focus on students who have been identified as victims of bullies. Measures are directed at developing attitudes and creating conditions that reduce the extent of bullying in the school as a whole.

One of these measures is the questionnaire survey. This is vital to work concretely with the problem and is essential to collect more detailed information about the specific situation at schools. The questionnaire survey yields information concerning the extent of bully/victim problems, the frequency with which teachers intervene, and the absolute number of students in the different grades who are involved in these problems (Olweus, 1993). Furthermore, the personnel working in every school needs to take a proactive stance. They could begin by assessing the situation schoolwide, obtaining information about whether, when, and where students have been a victim, a bully, or a witness (Hazler, 1994).

According to Roberts and Coursel (1996), the study should focus on four aspects of student experiences: (a) actual instances of victimization; (b) self-esteem levels; (c) perception of danger in the school; and (d) perception of anonymity. This mapping of the extent of bully/victim problems is a good starting point for an intervention program. However, questionnaires discriminate against pupils who find it difficult to read (Sharp & Smith, 1994). Other options suggested by Roberts and Coursel (1996) are interviews and individual pupil activities. Interviews allow more learning to occur about the subject, but can be lengthy and time-consuming. The individual pupil activities help target interventions more specifically. However, they can be impractical on a large scale (Sharp & Smith, 1994).

Another important component in dealing with bullying is involving parents. Hazler, Hoover, & Oliver, (1996) stated that classroom involvement between school and home is clearly desirable if bully/victim problems are to be efficiently counteracted. Involvement can be initiated through general PTA meetings in which all parents at the school, or some sub-group of them, are invited to participate in meetings with teachers. Encouraging parents to get involved in school activities will strengthen the connection between home and school and can have a significant effect on students' behavior at school (Hazler, 1996).

Stein (1996) stated that having a bullying prevention committee comprised of parents, teachers, students, and administrators can help the anti-bullying campaign succeed. Input from parents is essential if the program is to be taken seriously, and this is an effective way of doing so. Having this committee to evaluate problems, get goals, and plan programming will insure the potential problem of resistance be minimized, if not eliminated (Hoover & Oliver, 1996).

Supervision is another component in dealing with bullying within the Measures at the School Level (Olweus, 1993). Bullying is likely to be a feature of most, if not all, junior/middle schools, and the playground is likely to be the most common location in which such anti-social behavior will be carried out (Sharp & Smith, 1994). Some speculated reasons for this are the lack of effective supervision when often the ratio of children to playground supervisors exceeds 50:1. Increasing supervision will help, but there are other things that can also be done (Sharp & Smith, 1994; Tattum, 1993). Training courses for playground supervisors and building better relationships between playground supervisors and students and teachers are two important elements in this process (Olweus, 1993; Sharp & Smith, 1994). Implementing both of these strategies will help reduce levels of bullying by opening the lines of communication between people and making it known to students that bullying is unacceptable behavior (Hoover & Hazler, 1991).

An important aid in counteracting bully/victim problems and creating a better social “climate” within the classroom is for the teacher and the students to agree on simple rules about bullying (Olweus, 1993). This is part of the third component of Olweus’ (1993) intervention program, Measures at the Class Level. At this level, the three main parts are class rules, class meetings, and classroom activities. When considering class rules, it is important to include specific rules aimed at bullying—both directly and indirectly. Initially, students should take the responsibility of coming up with the rules, with the teacher having these three main rules ready to suggest and discuss with the class: (a) students should not bully other students; (b) students should try to help students who are being bullied; and (c) students should make a point to include students who become easily left out. Sharp and Smith (1994) corroborated this point by stating that doing this will help create a caring community, where pupils help and trust one another.

Classroom meetings and activities are two other essential elements to the Measures at the Class Level. It is important for the class to have a natural forum in which to talk about their concerns (Olweus, 1993). This can be accomplished through a class meeting in which both teacher and students participate. A weekly meeting that allows students to express their concerns at the class level or school level will help to keep up awareness of the problem. This regular review of the week can be expected to exert considerable group pressure, in particular on



students who have a tendency to bully others (Olweus, 1994). Hazler (1994) agreed that keeping the awareness and issue alive can be done through meetings. However, he stated that whole class discussions may be difficult for those students who are affected by bullying. Therefore, he suggested that the teacher let the students know he or she is available for them to discuss their concerns individually or with a few other students. This procedure can be just as effective as meeting with the entire class.

Classroom activities for bullying can be taught through cooperative learning. This is preferred because considerable research (Johnson, Johnson, & Maruyama, 1983) has shown that the method of cooperative learning has favorable effects, not only on learning and achievement, but also in other areas. “Students who participate in cooperative groups are likely to be more accepting of and more positive toward one another, to be helpful and supportive of one another, and to develop fewer prejudices toward group members of other races or nationalities than do other children” (p. 25).

Creating appropriate awareness activities can help students focus on understanding how victims, bullies and witnesses feel and why they act the way they do (Hazler, 1994). He suggested that having students look at their own experiences and those of others can be done through discussion, role-playing, and writing. This can increase students’ understanding of the situation, as well as their willingness to intervene in future instances.

Assertiveness training is another component of this program. Young people tend to see things in black and white; therefore, they often use either demanding or acquiescing behaviors (Hazler, 1994). Learning how to assert themselves without demanding to get their way, and learning how to compromise, are important lessons (Hazler, 1994). Hoover and Oliver (1996) added to this by including cognitive methods and strategies as important when dealing with the topic of bullying and assertiveness training. Their plan for strength-building includes attending to one's own responses, initiating internal dialogues, and learning better coping skills (Hoover & Oliver, 1996). This cognitive approach deals with self-talk strategies and disputing irrational beliefs, those similar to Albert Ellis' Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy.

Measures at the Individual Level include individual counseling and discussion groups. Some children may not respond in spite of many efforts; therefore, it is important to consider referring them to counseling (Hazler, 1994; Olweus, 1993). When this occurs, it is very important for counselors to use their listening skills to fully understand the students' concerns. Counselors must listen to understand the presenting circumstances and to assess students' affective, cognitive and behavioral states (Roberts & Coursel, 1996). This can help the counselor comprehend the deeper components of the experience and identify major factors that may contribute in making individuals more vulnerable in the school environment (Roberts & Coursel, 1996).

According to Olweus' program, discussion groups consist of talking with parents of victims and bullies. Two goals of these groups are increasing the emotional closeness and togetherness of the family and helping family members achieve greater structure and consistency (Hoover & Hazler, 1991; Olweus, 1993). These two primary directions in the process of counseling will help support the goal of respecting others and succeeding in school (Hoover & Hazler, 1991). Examples of activities given by the authors include family sculpting, looking at communication patterns, and working toward overall improvement of the family structure.

Olweus' (1993) intervention program was implemented in 42 schools in Berlin. The subjects were approximately 2,500 boys and girls in grades fourth through seventh grade. Data was collected over a period of 8 months to 20 months, depending on the school district. The major parts of the intervention program were a teacher booklet, a parent folder, a videocassette, and a bully/victim questionnaire. In addition, approximately 15 months after the program was presented to the schools, a two-hour meeting with the members of the staff was implemented to discuss their thoughts and feelings.

The main findings of the study were as follows: (a) marked reductions (by 50 percent or more) in bully/victim problems during the two years following the introduction of the intervention program; (b) a clear reduction in general antisocial behavior such as vandalism, fighting, theft, drunkenness, and truancy;

(c) marked improvement in regards to various aspects of the “social climate” of the class: improved order and discipline, more positive social relationships, and a more positive attitude to schoolwork and the school; (d) a reduction in the number and percentage of *new* victims; and (e) an increase in student satisfaction with school life (Olweus, 1993).

Against this background, it can be stated that bullying is a considerable problem in Norwegian schools and even looked upon as a concern in Great Britain, Canada, and the United States. This concern is one that deserves ample attention considering the many risk factors that school children are exposed to daily. Olweus’ (1993) study and intervention program gives a good deal of reliable information available about bully/victim problems. As shown in Olweus’ study, intervention can be very effective in counteracting the preventing of concerns about bullying. A deciding factor in the success of a program similar to this would be the involvement on the part of adults in deciding how much bullying can be tolerated.

The next sections of this paper outline how the author conducted a pilot study with a group of fifth graders at her school during the 1997-1998 school year. Information was obtained through a questionnaire that was explained and administered to students within the classroom concerning the topic of bullying. This information showed a substantial need to address this concern further, as results showed a high frequency of bullying. Following this, the next school year

the author implemented a bullying intervention program along with a pre and posttest in order to see any changes that may have taken place. The description of this study including the procedure, results, and discussion are described in detail below.

### Pilot Study

To look at the prevalence of bullying in her school, the author of this paper conducted a pilot study was conducted during the 1997-1998 school year within a rural-Midwestern elementary school. Forty-four fifth graders completed a questionnaire concerning the effects of bullying on themselves and others. Furthermore, 34 employees of the school, including teachers, bus drivers, and paraprofessionals, also completed surveys concerning their perceptions of bullying in the school.

Twenty-three of the forty-four fifth grade students (53%) reported previous bullying incidents. Eighty-two percent reported bullying in the form of verbal incidents, whereas 18% reported incidents as being physical. Fifty-seven percent of the reported verbal bullying was from boys and 43% was from girls. In regards to the physical incidents, 100% stemmed from boys. School personnel reported believing 44% of students in their K-6 setting have been bullied. However, only 50% of the questionnaires administered were returned. Nevertheless, there is an indication that bullying may be a concern within this school setting due to over 50 % of the sample reported having been bullied.

Based on the findings from this pilot study which suggested that bullying was a concern in this school, the author designed the current study.

The purpose of the current study is to investigate where and how often in the school bullying occurs and whether bullying takes on physical and or verbal characteristics. To attempt to decrease the amount of bullying incidents, eight classroom guidance lessons will be taught to the participants in the study over a period of sixteen weeks. It is hypothesized that both boys and girls will equally state they have been bullied and the overall prevalence of bullying will decrease for groups after the intervention. Furthermore, the author believed she would find that bullying occurred most often on the playground setting and is more verbal in nature. Another hypothesis is that students who have stated they have bullied are more likely to have a negative attitude overall about bullying. Finally, the author believed she would find that students more likely think bullying is handled fairly well by school personnel.

### Method of Current Study

#### Participants

Participants were 33 sixth grade students at a rural, Midwestern school. Students were selected based upon the pilot study that was conducted during their fifth grade school year in the spring of 1998.

## Materials

The bullying curriculum Why is Everybody Always Picking on Me: A Guide to Handling Bullies (Webster, 1991) was used in the study. This intervention program consisted of sixteen prepared activities for developing the insights and skills to end bullying. However, due to scheduling and time constraints, eight lessons were taught over a period of a sixteen week period.

The curriculum being used was chosen because it shared the same components as Olweus' intervention program for bullying. Webster's curriculum is structured in a similar format where constructing a questionnaire to gather information is the first component. This is followed by awareness and involvement of students and staff as bullying is defined. Thirdly, Webster's curriculum addressed Measures at the Class and Individual Levels where classroom activities, discussion groups, and individual counseling (if needed) are implemented. Overall, the curriculum used in this study offers components that address the issues of bullying by helping victims learn how to never be bullied again, and how bullies can learn how to get what they want without bullying.

Students' perceptions on bullying will be measured with an author-generated questionnaire composed of 14 questions as a pretest before the intervention and as a posttest at the conclusion of the intervention. Using the questionnaire and the definition of bullying, participants will rate their attitudes on bullying pertaining to the four subject areas: (a) who does the bullying?; (b)

where does the bullying occur?; (c) attitudes about bullying; and (d) how was the bullying handled? (See Appendix A).

### Procedure

Before the implementation of the intervention program, the participants completed the “Bullying at School” questionnaire within the classroom setting. Included in this was demographic items such as gender, age, and grade.

Following the completion of the questionnaire, an eight-week intervention program was implemented. One lesson every two weeks was taught. The eight lessons were as follows: (a) What is a Bully?; (b) Teasing vs. Bullying; (c) How Does Bullying Affect Us?; (d) Broken Toy; (e) Why Do Bullies and Victims Exist?; (f) How Can We Stop Bullying?; (g) Role-play; and (h) How Victims Can Become Winners. Finally, after the completion of the eighth lesson, students again completed the “Bullying at School” questionnaire, a second time as a posttest.

### Data Analysis

Scores on the “Bullying at School” questionnaire were calculated by summing responses to all items except for the items within the section, “Where does the bullying occur?” The lower the particular score within the section “Who does the bullying?” the less likely they have been involved in a bullying incident. The higher the score within the section, “How is the Bullying Handled?” the more likely students perceived school officials' efforts as being poor in handling



bullying incidents. The higher the score within the section, “Attitudes about bullying,” the more likely the participants possessed a positive attitude concerning bullying (see Appendices A and B). Finally, a difference of scores was run between the pre and post-test (see Appendices A and B). These scores showed any other possible effects from the applied intervention.

### Results

There were four hypotheses in this study. They were as follows: (a) both males and females will equally state they have been bullied, (b) the overall prevalence of bullying will decrease for both groups, (c) bullying will occur most often within the playground setting, and (d) bullying will be mostly verbal in nature.

The first hypothesis was not supported by the results, as more males than females were bullied before and after the proposed intervention (Table 1). The number of bullying incidents decreased for both males and females after the proposed intervention (Table 1) showing that the second hypothesis was also supported. The third hypothesis was supported by the results which indicated that bullying incidents occurred more frequently within the playground setting (Table 2). Bullying was reported equally as being both verbal and physical in nature (Table 3), meaning that the fourth hypothesis (which stated that bullying would be mostly verbal in nature) was not supported by the results of this study..

Table 1

Number of Students Reported Being Bullied  
Before and After Intervention.

Gender	Before	After
Male	12	10
Female	11	8
Total	23	18

Table 2

School Settings Where Bullying Took Place.

School Setting	Before	After
School Bus	15	9
Playground	21	14
Walking to/from school	5	1
Classroom	3	9
Lunchroom	3	5
Hallways	8	8
Gym	5	11
Locker Room	6	7
Sporting Events/Practices	9	6
Other	0	1

Table 3

Nature of Bullying Incidents

Type of Bullying	Before	After
Verbal	11	8
Physical	3	0
Both	11	11
Never been Bullied	10	15

Table 4

Students' Perceptions of How School OfficialsHandled Bullying Incidents

Student Ratings Before/After	My Bullying Incident	Other's Bullying Incident	Adult Efforts in Preventing Bullying	Adult Efforts in Making the School a Safe Place to Learn
Very Good	10/15	11/4	5/1	13/7
Good	6/4	6/6	14/19	15/23
Poor	6/11	9/19	9/9	3/1
Very Poor	4/4	5/5	5/4	2/3

## Discussion

As expected, the overall prevalence of male and female bullying incidents decreased after the intervention. Specifically, 23 out of 34 students (67%) reported bullying occurring prior to the intervention, while 18 out of 34 students (52%) reported bullying incidents afterwards. In addition, contrary to the prediction that equal numbers of males and females would report having been bullied before and after the intervention, the number of reported bullying incidents for males was slightly higher than those of females. Although males had a higher reporting rate, caution must be taken due to the fact that other factors such as peer pressure, lack of anonymity, and/or the depth of understanding by students concerning the intervention may have played a role in the results.

Prior to intervention, bullying incidents happened primarily within the playground and school bus settings. After the intervention, the playground

remained the most common school setting in which bullying occurred, followed by the gymnasium, school bus, and classroom. Hence, these percentages supported the author's prediction; that is, bullying occurred most often within the playground setting. With students engaging in more aggressive type play on the playground and in gym class, higher frequencies of bullying incidents are bound to occur within these school settings. Perhaps the playground structure and supervision needs to be re-evaluated in order to help meet the needs of the students. Furthermore, the lack of available playground equipment and space at this school may provide many students with ample opportunity to engage in inappropriate behavior. Finally, as a result of a deficiency in available teachers to assist in playground supervision, the monitoring of student behavior ultimately suffers.

Students who engaged in bullying behaviors either were more likely to use verbal than physical tactics, or a combination of both verbal and physical means of bullying. Prior to intervention, 44% of the students stated they encountered *only* verbal bullying, whereas 12% stated the bullying they experienced was only physical, and 44% reported bullying that consisted of *both* verbal and physical abuse. Subsequently, 42% of students reported occurrences of verbal bullying, whereas 0% reported physical incidents of bullying, and 58% reported both verbal and physical incidents.

Prior to and following the intervention, students who were bullied were more likely to report that school personnel handled their bullying incident very well. In addition, students were more likely to perceive others' bullying incidents as being handled very well prior to the intervention; yet afterwards, they were more likely to report officials handled it poorly. In short, students' perceptions became more unfavorable concerning school personnel's effectiveness in handling bullying incidents following the intervention. Reasons for this change may be seen as twofold: (a) students' progressive increase in self-awareness of the concept of bullying, and/or (b) students tended to rate their approval based on the severity of punishment given to the bully by school officials. Students were also more likely to report after the intervention that others' bullying incidents were handled less favorably than their own. In contrast, students indicated that school officials did a good job in handling bullying incidents which concerned themselves. Thus, the cliché "Others have it better than I do" may not apply to this student population.

Students' perceptions regarding adult efforts in preventing bullying and in making school a safe place to learn showed positive results. Before and after the bullying intervention, students were more likely to report the school did a good job in preventing bullying and that adults did a good job of making the school a safe place to learn. Although this contradicts with how students perceived the school officials' handling of bullying, students still perceived the school as a safe

place in which to learn and where adults do what they can to prevent bullying. This may be true because, even though incidents of bullying do occur, these incidents are not substantial enough to be considered "highly dangerous situations" (e.g., school shootings or bomb threats) in which students do not feel safe and able to learn.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate where and how often in the school bullying occurred, whether bullying consisted of physical and/or verbal characteristics, and whether incidents of bullying would decrease following an intervention consisting of 8 classroom guidance lessons. These lessons were taught to 35 sixth grade students over a period of 16 weeks. Overall, bullying incidents decreased for both males and females, most bullying incidents took place on the playground, and students reported school officials did a good job in preventing bullying and creating a safe environment for learning. However, students overall reported that when it came to handling bullying incidents, school officials handled them poorly. Due to the fact that bullying is seen as a pervasive problem within many schools today, further research needs to address three main areas: (a) since only 8 out of the 16 lesson plans of this intervention were used during this study, it may be necessary to implement all 16 lessons in order to fully comprehend the impact of this intervention; (b) research needs to focus on how students perceive school personnel efforts in handling bullying incidents; and (c)

attention needs to be given to how school personnel perceive their own efforts in handling bullying within the school. Addressing these three main areas through further comprehensive investigations will hopefully help researchers better comprehend the nature of bullying and how to alleviate this problem in our schools.

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## Appendix A Bullying at School Pre-Test

**\*Bullying definition:** It is important for us to know what **YOU** think about bullying, but you can begin by thinking of bullying as one or a group of students picking on other students or treating them in a way they do not like. Either bullying can be physical (for example, hitting, kicking and so on) or it can be verbal (for example threats, gossiping, name-calling and so on).

**\*Please answer the questions as directed.**

1. Have other students at this school ever bullied you? Circle your answer below. (Circle only one).
- Yes                      No

2. What kind of bullying has happened to you? Circle your answer below. (Circle only one).
- Verbal              Physical                      Both                      I have not been bullied.

### A. WHO DOES THE BULLYING?

Please check the answer that best applies to you. Check only one.

1. The bullying I have received was from:
- ☐ **No one**, I was not bullied.
- ☐ I was bullied mostly by boys
- ☐ I was bullied mostly by girls
- ☐ I was bullied by both boys and girls.

2. The age of kids who bullied me was:
- ☐ **No one**, I was not bullied.
- ☐ Only kids **younger** than me.
- ☐ Only kids my **own age/grade**.
- ☐ **Both** younger and older kids.
- ☐ Only kids **older** than me.

3. Have you ever bullied other students (younger or older) at this school?

Yes                      No

## B. WHERE DOES THE BULLYING OCCUR?

Please check beside the places at school, or coming to and from school, where you have been bullied (if at all). You may check all that are true for you.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> On the school bus.   | 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Playground                |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom  | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Walking to or from school |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Lunchroom  | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Hallways                  |
| 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Gym  | 8. <input type="checkbox"/> Locker Room               |
| 9. <input type="checkbox"/> Sporting events  |   |
| 10. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (You write in the places where you've been bullied) |   |
- 

## C. ATTITUDES ABOUT BULLYING

Please show how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

- Most teasing I see is done in fun, not to hurt people.  
How much do you agree? Circle only one.  
  

Agree very much	Agree
Disagree	Disagree very much
- Most students who get bullied bring it on themselves.  
How much do you agree? Circle only one.  
  

Agree very much	Agree
Disagree	Disagree very much
- Bullying is something all kids go through.  
How much do you agree? Circle only one.  
  

Agree very much	Agree
Disagree	Disagree very much

4. Bullying helps people by making them tougher.

How much do you agree?      Circle only one.

Agree very much                      Agree

Disagree                                  Disagree very much

#### **D. HOW IS BULLYING HANDLED?**

Please check the answer that best applies to you. Check only one.

1. If you were bullied, how well did school officials handle it?
  - ☐ I was not bullied.
  - ☐ Adults at school did not deal with the bullying at all.
  - ☐ Adults at school handled the bullying poorly.
  - ☐ Adults at the school handled the bullying well.
2. How well do the school officials handle the bullying of others you have seen at your school?
  - ☐ I never saw anyone bullied.
  - ☐ Adults at school did not deal with the bullying at all.
  - ☐ Adults at school handled the bullying poorly.
  - ☐ Adults at the school handled the bullying well.
3. Overall, how would you rate the efforts of adults at your school to prevent students from picking on one another?
  - ☐ Very Good
  - ☐ Good
  - ☐ Poor
  - ☐ Very Poor
4. Overall, how would you rate the efforts of adults (teachers, principal, etc.) to make your school a safe place in which to learn?
  - ☐ Very Good
  - ☐ Good
  - ☐ Poor
  - ☐ Very Poor

#### **E. ABOUT YOU**

Are You: ☐ Male ☐ Female      Your Age (in years)   
 Your Grade In School  \*Thank You For Completing This Survey\*

Appendix B  
Bullying at School  
Post-Test

**\*Bullying definition:** It is important for us to know what **YOU** think about bullying, but you can begin by thinking of bullying as one or a group of students picking on other students or treating them in a way they do not like. Either bullying can be physical (for example, hitting, kicking and so on) or it can be verbal (for example threats, gossiping, name-calling and so on).

**\*Please answer the questions as directed.**

4. Have other students at this school ever bullied you **since the start of the bullying intervention**? Circle your answer below. (Circle only one).

Yes

No

5. What kind of bullying has happened to you? Circle your answer below. (Circle only one).

Verbal

Physical

Both

I have not been bullied.

**A. WHO DOES THE BULLYING? (SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE BULLYING INTERVENTION)**

Please check the answer that best applies to you. Check only one.

1. The bullying I have received was from:

☐ **No one**, I was not bullied.

☐ I was bullied mostly by boys

☐ I was bullied mostly by girls

☐ I was bullied by both boys and girls.

2. The age of kids who bullied me was:

☐ **No one**, I was not bullied.

☐ Only kids **younger** than me.

☐ Only kids my **own age/grade**.

☐ **Both** younger and older kids.

☐ Only kids **older** than me.

3. Have you ever bullied other students (younger or older) at this school **since the start of the bullying intervention**?

Yes

No

## B. WHERE DOES THE BULLYING OCCUR?

Please check beside the places at school, or coming to and from school, where you have been bullied **since the start of the bullying intervention** (if at all).

You may check all that are true for you.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> On the school bus.   | 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Playground                |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom  | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Walking to or from school |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Lunchroom  | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Hallways                  |
| 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Gym  | 8. <input type="checkbox"/> Locker Room               |
| 9. <input type="checkbox"/> Sporting events  |   |
| 10. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (You write in the places where you've been bullied) |   |
- 

## C. ATTITUDES ABOUT BULLYING (SINCE THE START OF THE BULLYING INTERVENTION)

Please show how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

- Most teasing I see is done in fun, not to hurt people.  
How much do you agree?    Circle only one.  
  

Agree very much	Agree
Disagree	Disagree very much
- Most students who get bullied bring it on themselves.  
How much do you agree?    Circle only one.  
  

Agree very much	Agree
Disagree	Disagree very much
- Bullying is something all kids go through.  
How much do you agree?    Circle only one.  
  

Agree very much	Agree
Disagree	Disagree very much

4. Bullying helps people by making them tougher.

How much do you agree? Circle only one.

Agree very much

Agree

Disagree

Disagree very much

#### **D. HOW IS BULLYING HANDLED? (SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE BULLYING INTERVENTION)**

Please check the answer that best applies to you. Check only one.

1. If you were bullied, how well did school officials handle it?
  - ☐ I was not bullied.
  - ☐ Adults at school did not deal with the bullying at all.
  - ☐ Adults at school handled the bullying poorly.
  - ☐ Adults at the school handled the bullying well.
2. How well do the school officials handle the bullying of others you have seen at your school?
  - ☐ I never saw anyone bullied.
  - ☐ Adults at school did not deal with the bullying at all.
  - ☐ Adults at school handled the bullying poorly.
  - ☐ Adults at the school handled the bullying well.
3. Overall, how would you rate the efforts of adults at your school to prevent students from picking on one another?
  - ☐ Very Good
  - ☐ Good
  - ☐ Poor
  - ☐ Very Poor
4. Overall, how would you rate the efforts of adults (teachers, principal, etc.) to make your school a safe place in which to learn?
  - ☐ Very Good
  - ☐ Good
  - ☐ Poor
  - ☐ Very Poor

#### **E. ABOUT YOU**

Are You: ☐ Male ☐ Female      Your Age (in years)

Your Grade In School  \*Thank You For Completing This Survey\*